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Eid-ul Adha and Hajj Ceremonies

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BAGHDAD, Iraq – Eid-ul Adha - Sacrifice Day in Arabic - is an important day of celebration and festivities for Muslims. The ceremony commemorates the prophet Abraham's act of sacrificing his oldest son, Ishmael, as commanded by Allah. Allah substituted Ishmael with a ram.

Eid-ul Adha is on the 10th day of Islamic calendar month, Dhul Hijjah (the last month of the Islamic year). During this time, Muslims sacrifice a third of their meat to the poor, a third to friends and relatives, and keep a third for themselves. After praying in congregation in the morning, a sacrifice of either a goat, a sheep, a ram, a camel or a cow is to be made.

At least once in a lifetime, a Muslim is expected to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca, the sacred city of Islam. This holy journey is called the hajj. While a visit to Mecca is beneficial any time of the year, it must take place during the month of Dhu al-Hijja to fulfill the requirement of the hajj.

*As with *syam* (fasting during Ramadan), there are exceptions for those who are physically or financially unable to fulfill this obligation. Someone may make the trip in their stead.*

The hajj, which is commanded in the Qur'an, was established by the prophet Muhammad, but Muslim tradition dates it back to Abraham, who was instructed by angels. The hajj was one of the last public acts of worship performed by Muhammad before his death.

*For many Muslims, the pilgrimage unifies all Muslims, who come together from all over the world to worship. Those who have completed the pilgrimage are able to add the title *hajj* or *hajji* to their names.*

*Upon arriving in Mecca, a state of purity (*ihram*) is entered. Males don two white, seamless sheets that they wrapped around their waist and wear sandals. This signifies the state of holiness the pilgrims have entered and contributes a sense of unity by removing visible indicators of class, wealth and culture. Women dress in white with only faces and hands uncovered.*

*The ritual begins by a pilgrim walking around the Ka'ba seven times (called the *tawaf*) while reciting the *talbiya*. The pilgrim then touches the Black Stone, prays twice toward the Station of Abraham and then runs seven times between the small mountains called al-Safa and al-Marwa.*

*The second stage takes place between the 8th and 12th days of Dhu al-Hijja, and begins with a sermon (*khutba*) at the mosque in Mecca. On the eighth day and night, the pilgrim stays at Mina or Arafat mountain. On the ninth day, the ritual of *wuquf* (standing) takes place at the small hill of Jabal al-Rahma in Arafat. The pilgrim then returns to Muzdalifa, a small town within the Meccan boundaries, to spend the night.*

*The tenth day is Eid-ul Adha, a major holiday observed by all Muslims. For those participating in the hajj, the day is spent in Mecca. The pilgrim sacrifices an animal to commemorate Abraham's sacrifice and throws seven small stones at each of three pillars on three consecutive days (the pillars represent sins). The pilgrim then returns to Mecca, where the *tawaf* is performed again. The state of *ihram* is then lifted.*

concludes with the head being shaved or the hair being trimmed.

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